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ART. VIII. — *The Countess Ida. A Tale of Berlin*. By the Author of "Norman Leslie," "Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man," &c. In Two Volumes. New York : Harper and Brothers. 1840. 12mo.

THE previous writings of Mr. Fay had not prepared us for the superior merit of the work before us. He has been favorably known as a contributor to the pages of the New York "Mirror," that magazine of agreeable but very light literature. His writings were always pleasing, sometimes pointed and sprightly, but never powerful. They were very good for whiling away a half hour's leisure, in the intervals of some laborious occupation ; they refreshed the wearied spirit like the afternoon *siesta* of the South. With regard to style, they never rose above a commonplace purity and precision, which neither roused a lively interest, nor shocked a fastidious taste. The reader never thought of resorting to Mr. Fay for animated description, profound sentiment, or vigorous delineation of character. We were never thrilled by a brilliant expression that betrayed, like a flash of lightning, the depths of a fervid genius, or by a new and sparkling combination of thought, through which shone the radiance of a poetic soul, "of imagination all compact." But we never threw aside his writings, disgusted by those fantastic barbarisms of speech which deform so many popular works of the day, or by those moral paradoxes, which are as offensive to the judgment and principles of sober-minded men, as they are fascinating to the perverted feelings and crude conceptions of the small-brained and long-haired young gentlemen, who set up, with the most entertaining self-complacency, and the most oracular unmeaningness of language, for the arbiters of taste, philosophy, and poetry. His powers seemed to fit him peculiarly for gliding smoothly over the surface of literature and society, but not for diving into the depths of life, and bringing up the priceless pearls of thought ; and his style was well adapted for the graceful utterance of superficial observation, and for the slight and rather water-colored descriptions with which his works abounded. His command over the resources of the English language appeared to be extremely limited. The ornaments of a copious vocabulary never seemed to be within his reach. His sentences were short, unimaginative, and dry. We were never roused by

an eloquent paragraph, whose majestic sweep of words, and brilliant array of imagery, carried us away like a fine strain of organ music. Our feelings were never raised beyond a state of comfortable repose, nor ever sunk much below it.

Thus the general character of Mr. Fay's writings seemed to place him among those who contribute to the amusement of the moment, without leaving a permanent trace of their minds upon the literature of their country and age ; who pass, as it were, over "the smooth surface of a summer sea," to be seen for a day, and forgotten for ever ; graceful figures in the panorama of contemporary literature, but too insignificant to be included in the great historical picture which transmits to posterity the mighty intellectual representation of an age.

But Mr. Fay's literary powers have produced fruits much richer than their early promise. Longer experience of life, greater practice in composition, and increased familiarity with the best models of European literature, have given him a vigorous impulse, and unfolded his talents in a surprising manner. His observations have gone deeper, his reflections are more weighty, and his power of conceiving and representing the successive scenes of a narrative has grown stronger than we had any reason to anticipate. In forming the idea of a character also, and in setting it forth by appropriate action, he has shown a remarkable progress. Formerly his characters were faintly-drawn, unsubstantial figures, flitting before his reader's mind, and vanishing away like the unreal mockery of a dream. Now they are well conceived and sharply delineated ; they breathe the sentiments, and tremble with the passions, of natural men and women ; they show the real qualities which living beings display to the observer, and act from the real motives which form the springs of conduct in social life. His narrative is animated and interesting ; the incidents are well selected, and judiciously arranged ; and the plot is put together with a more instructed eye to the proper combination of parts, and to the general effect. We are the more gratified to notice this progress, because Mr. Fay has always manifested a high moral sense ; and we have entire confidence that his powers, to whatever point they may be unfolded, will never be desecrated by ministering to the cause of vice ; that he will never render the artistic talent he possesses the means of embellishing voluptuous sentiment, or imbecility of heart ; and that whatever comes from his pen will breathe the spirit of manly virtue.

“ The *Countess Ida* ” is a work, we think, which will give Mr. Fay a much higher reputation than all his previous writings. The perusal of this interesting tale has suggested the observations which we have just made ; and we think our readers, who shall examine the book, will sustain our opinion of the great increase of power which he has manifested in its composition. The intention of the writer, as stated in his short Preface, was “ to illustrate a principle, and to record his protest against a useless and barbarous custom, which, to the shame of his own country, exists there in a less modified form, than the good sense and good taste of European communities, to say nothing of their moral and religious feeling, would sanction elsewhere.” The custom alluded to is that of duelling ; and the plot of the novel is constructed for the purpose of showing the wickedness and horrors of the system, and the possibility of resisting a practice founded upon a false sense of honor, and of meeting calmly, bearing patiently, and conquering triumphantly the reproaches, the taunts, the contempt, and the infamy which a conscientious obedience to the voice of duty, in defiance of the rooted prejudices of society, never fails to bring down upon the head of the brave man who dares to be called a coward. The story is managed with considerable art ; the incidents are generally well devised ; and the catastrophe does ample poetic justice all round. Some scenes in the course of the narrative show a masterly skill in the grouping of terrific circumstances, which make one's hair stand on end ; some of the perils to which the hero is exposed, and some of his marvellous escapes, border too closely, perhaps, on the impossible.

We may as well remark, before we proceed to a closer examination of the structure of the novel, that, in common with all works of fiction designed to illustrate a principle, it betrays here and there the forcing process by which things are artificially compelled to bear upon the moral or dogmatic aim of the author. This is a defect, which it would seem almost, if not quite, impossible for an author to escape, who sets out with a deliberate purpose of guiding all the trains of incident in his plot straight forward to a didactic conclusion ; and it really injures the moral effect of the work as much as it detracts from its beauty as a work of art. All the bad characters of such a work are very apt to be insufferably bad ;

all the good characters to be insufferably good. All the bad characters turn out so badly as to be an "awful beacon" to the rising generation, and all the good characters turn out so well as to offer a handsome premium upon virtue to all the nice little boys who are favored by its perusal. Miss Edgeworth's "Patronage" is a good illustration of the truth of this remark. The good family are all too good ; and the bad are really too bad ; and the result to both bears an exact mathematical proportion to their respective virtues and vices. It is arrived at by solving the problem of the story upon the principles of a sort of moral Rule of Three. In the one family, the young lawyer is sure to gain his cause ; the young doctor is sure to cure the disease, or to operate successfully upon the broken leg intrusted to his care ; and the young ladies we know from the first will inevitably be splendidly and happily married. The other family is the exact reverse of all this. We can take our oath at the outset that the son will turn out a dishonest blockhead, the daughter will wed miserably, and the whole family will go to perdition.

Mr. Fay's novel is chargeable with this same defect. One class of characters are encircled with a halo of preternatural light ; and another wrapped in the fold of preternatural moral darkness. The virtuous personages, after a period of dreadful suffering, are rewarded with a degree of happiness and of worldly prosperity, by which we feel that their past woes are more than counterbalanced ; the villains are plunged into an abyss of retributive misery, which almost obliterates the sense of their damning misdeeds. But this does not mark the book so distinctly, as the corresponding trait characterizes the work of Miss Edgeworth to which we have alluded. Many parts of Mr. Fay's novel are conceived and executed with a freedom and spirit, which show that truth to nature was the author's only guide ; many scenes and descriptions are thrown off with a vigor of coloring that expresses only the rapid movement, and the unbiassed, unconscious impulse, of the inspiration of genius. And these are certainly the best parts of the novel ; best, because we feel them to be the truest representations of human life and human nature. For the actual events that pass around us, though they never fail to inculcate moral truth, yet never do this broadly and directly. The instructions furnished by them are drawn from hints, and intimations, more or less distinct, but

never set forth with the formality of a systematic code. We find nowhere in human life a series of events arranged with an apparent moral plan, forming a scheme of logical completeness, and winding up with a moral truth, so pointedly uttered, that there is no gainsaying it. Now, though literature can never be an exact representative of nature and life, since its means are limited, and human powers work within a comparatively narrow range, while nature and life sweep through all ages, yet the poet and writer of fiction ought to conform, as much as circumstances admit, to their prototype ; they must not let the element of art, which they add to nature, predominate over the great basis of all works of poetry and fiction, nature itself. This is just the danger, to which the creations of fiction constructed to illustrate a principle are most exposed, and from which no author, who has written after this method, has wholly escaped.

The time of the opening of this story is the year 1790. Several of the most important characters are brought together in the *diligence*, which ran between Hamburg and Berlin. A handsome young man, a respectable middle-aged lady, and a family of vulgar English travellers, find themselves fellow-passengers on the journey to the Prussian capital. Nothing very special happens to them on the way ; the journey was accomplished very much as it had been many times before, and has been many times since. A conversation of some interest, however, springs up between the handsome young man and the respectable middle-aged lady, from which it appears, that she is closely connected, whether by relationship or by some other tie does not yet appear, with a noble family in Berlin, to the head of which our young gentleman had letters of introduction. It turns out, however, that the lady has been for many years a governess in the family of the noble Count Carolan, and that she is an English woman, bearing, at the period of the commencement of the story, the name of Madame Wharton. Our hero's name, it should be mentioned, is Mr. Wyndham. In the course of conversation, the interesting and important fact is brought to light, that Count Carolan has a beautiful daughter, at the enchanting age of eighteen ; and that she is already engaged to a young English nobleman, Lord Elkington, "about two-and-twenty ; a fashionable, elegant young man, of distinguished manners, and very fond of Ida," the young lady in question. Soon after, the shades of night descend

upon the *Schnellwagen*, and the passengers very unceremoniously go to sleep, "nodding and bobbing to each other in the dark, not greatly disturbed by the frequent change of horses, the sounding horn, and the various other noises which one might suppose sufficient to drive 'tired nature's sweet restorer' from any eyelids."

Our hero arrives at Berlin, and becomes at once a distinguished ornament of the highest society in that aristocratic capital. Among the visitors there, are Lord Elkington, and his mother, the Countess of Beverly, the former being, as before stated, the suitor of the beautiful Ida. The plot begins immediately to thicken. Lady Beverly is seized by an unaccountable and uncontrollable emotion upon seeing Mr. Wyndham. Mr. Wyndham, notwithstanding sundry grave admonitions from Madame Wharton, who has been led on by a mysterious feeling to take the deepest interest in his fate, falls desperately in love with Ida; and Ida herself experiences very strange feelings, such as she never had experienced before; in fact, notwithstanding her relations to Lord Elkington, she falls in love with our hero too, without knowing what is the matter. Things are now in as fine a train as heart can desire. The entanglement increases, and the real qualities of the personages in the tale are gradually, and not unskillfully brought to light, as the successive events come forth. Lord Elkington turns out a cheat at cards, a ruffian, a debauchee; in short, every thing that is bad. Wyndham, a man of high honor, undaunted courage, and deep piety. But a mystery hangs over his birth, which he has never been able to fathom. He has been educated by the kindness of a friend, and is now supported by some person unknown, who lodges at a banker's an annual allowance of five hundred pounds. By degrees, through the malice of his enemies, suspicions are thrown upon his character; his fair fame is slandered, and he refuses to call the offender to account in the mode adopted by gentlemen. This of course involves him in still deeper troubles, and he is branded both as a coward and an impostor, he is shunned by the fashionable friends who were so obsequious to him before, and is doomed to meet even "altered friendship's half-averted eye." He bears up heroically under these accumulated sufferings, and finally receives a blow from his inexorable enemy, Lord Elkington, who has observed the feelings of mutual, though unconscious, attachment between Ida and him, and who is determined to drive him into a duel. For a moment, his

resolution is staggered. The stunning sense of personal dishonor almost unmans him, and the passage wherein this is described is one of decided power.

“ A blow. This was the blasting thought which filled Claude's mind as he bent his steps he scarce knew whither. He was in a state of agitation which he had never experienced before. He had no longer any power over his reason. His thoughts were tossed to and fro by a whirlwind. He felt, for the moment, that he would commit any crime, could he but tear the heart out of Elkington's bosom ! He did not recognise himself. He appeared in his own eyes a *demon*, so dreadfully does unrestrained passion metamorphose even the most rational. All his calm grandeur, — his sense of right, — his reasoning powers, — his resolutions of duty, — his dependence on God, — they were all gone. There was the same difference between his mind then, and as it usually was in its peaceful moments, as between the tall and gently advancing ship, with sails set, each rope in its place, obedient to the helm, and rising and falling on the summer waves ; and the same vessel in a fearful tempest, its sails rent to pieces, its masts down, its rudder broken, and its deck swept by huge waves which threaten instant destruction. He could only think one thought, — he could only breathe one word, — *A blow !*

“ He thought to seek Elkington and sacrifice him on the spot.

“ He resolved to destroy himself instantly.

“ He found himself at length at home. He went to his room, he flung himself on his bed, but it heaved beneath him, and fire flashed from his eyes and temples, and faces of a laughing crowd jeered and grinned around, and the finger of the scornful Elkington pointed at him, and people shouted in his ear in all sorts of tones, ‘ A blow ! a blow ! ’ The voice of hate muttered it ; it was shrieked as if by despair ; friendship seemed to utter it with an inflection of inquiry and incredulity ; it came to him with the laugh of childhood and from the scornful lips of women, — ‘ *A blow ! a blow !* ’

“ ‘ It is a dream ! ’ he murmured, and he arose from his bed. The heat in his body was intolerable. The very air he breathed seemed hot and burning. He threw off his coat, his vest ; he unloosed his cravat and shirt-collar, and sat down by the open window. But he could not sit still, — he could not lie, — he could not walk. The narrow room oppressed him by its limits ; and he strided to and fro, turning against the walls as a wearied and enraged lion paces the small floor of his iron cage, with a tread and a heart that should be upon the burning desert, or the unexplored, unbounded wood. At length he threw himself upon the naked floor, conscious that movement only fanned the fire within him.

“ ‘ A blow, — a blow ! Let me think of it ! ’

“ And, for a moment, the whirl and tumult of his mind subsided a little, and gave place to something like continuous reflection.

“ ‘ No,’ he thought, ‘ it is a dream, — that blasting stroke upon my brow, — a dream ? ’ He raised his hand to his face. He became conscious of a dim sense of pain now for the first time, and, on passing his fingers over it, he found the eye much swollen. He closed the other, and looked out of the window with that one injured. It was nearly deprived of sight. A vague appearance of light was all he could distinguish. The beautiful transparent air, — the bending sky, — the moon riding calmly over all the shocks of earth, — they were lost and fused together, without beauty or separate distinctness. The idea struck him that perhaps the wound was irreparable ; perhaps the eye was blind. No ! no ! it was no dream ! It was a bitter, deliberate, public, burning insult. It was the most blighting act of scorn and shame, — the fullest of humiliation, — the most palpable and memorable, — that which could be the least overlooked, or pardoned, or forgotten by mankind, — of all the wrongs that one human being could inflict upon another. It was irreparable. He who bestowed it could not undo it. Time, — distance, — virtue, — could not wash it out. It was a stain eternal. All great Neptune’s ocean could not clean its blackened traces, — there was but one thing —

“ He started to his feet.

“ It was *blood*. It was that great, mysterious, sacred specific, the touch of which blasts ordinary hands, — the very half-forgotten stain of which betrays ancientest crime, — drags the murderer to light, — raises the very dead out of their fleshless graves, till vengeance has had her banquet. The spot upon his forehead could only be effaced, — the flame in his heart could only be quenched, — by *blood* !

“ And he sat down and rested his elbows on a table, and leaned his throbbing temples on his fists.

“ ‘ Oh God ! ’ he suddenly exclaimed, dropping on his knee ; ‘ teach me, — guide me, — save me, — my heart is wild, — my hand is lifted, — give me some sign ! ’

“ He strove to pray, — as was his custom on occasions where his own sense of right wavered. But his heaving imagination could form no address to the Supreme Being. That serene power that sits above the clouds seemed itself to have deserted him in his deep degradation. He could not utter a prayer, or conceive one. Strange things flitted before his eyes, and flapped their wings in his face ; and laughter, and shrieks, and hisses rose once more around him, till the dark room seemed crowded with evil spirits, in the full ecstasy of their orgies

over a lost one. He leaned again his forehead upon the table, when suddenly a voice, as if of one of these fiends, seemed to say,

“‘Yes, you *are* a coward ! It is craven *fear* that holds your hand. You are a canting, trembling hypocrite. You deceive yourself with names of virtue and illusions of religion, — abject, — disgraced, — wretched creature ! No one else is deceived. Elkington is a gallant fellow. You injured him like a scoundrel, and then fled from him like a coward. You are afraid to fight a duel. An unmanly sensibility and womanish effeminacy is the secret of your convenient principles, — your puny virtue. Who made you a judge, — a reformer, — a prophet ? Who gave *you* light to see, what none of the wise, — the brave, — the great can see ? Who teaches *you* to distinguish between what is right and what is not, — between what God commands and what he forbids ? Why *not* fight a duel ? It is the custom ! It is a good custom. It is brave and manly. It unmasks cowards and sneaking hypocrites. Fool ! look into your own heart, and see what its honest dictates tell you of a *blow*. Every fibre of your trembling frame quivered with it. Every faculty of your shrinking soul fainted at it. Nature rose against it. A blow ! Since time began it is the badge of insult, — the mark of shame. It is a curse full of the accumulated infamy of ages. The very beast turns at it. Its bodily pain is but a type and faint shadow of its moral ruin. Bear this one, and you will receive another, — and another, — and another. Who hereafter will honor you ? who will love you ? Outcast ! the blood in your veins is water, — your heart is faint, — you are not a *man*, — you have borne a *blow* !’

“‘But I have *not* borne it,’ said Claude.

“He rose and reached from his bookcase a pair of travelling pistols, and, placing them in his bosom, rushed from his house into the street. At first he knew not whether it was dark or light, whether the weather was fair or cloudy, nor had he any precise idea of what he intended to do, or where he meant to go. He had not walked far when he saw a man. He was a sentinel. For the first time in his life he felt unable to bear the eyes of a fellow-being. The swollen wound upon his face seemed a mountain, and he forgot every thing but the desire to withdraw himself into solitude, — darkness, — and silence, — away from the gaze of all, — even were it in the grave. Then there came to him again, as he walked, startling thoughts of self-destruction. Only death could relieve him from the agony of his heart. He cast his eyes about him upon the surrounding objects, — the long, quiet streets, — the deserted squares, — the silent houses, — the soft, waving

trees. He wondered to behold such tranquillity, — such peace, — after all his anguish. He walked beneath the soft branches with shame, — he shrank from the moonlight reflected against the houses, — the very pavement he seemed to tread on as an intruder, — as a felon ; and he looked around him like guilt, stolen in the night from its lurking-place, — ashamed, — and fearful of being seen.

“ ‘ Ah,’ thought Claude, as a moment of calm reflection came to him with the soft air and balmy night-breeze, ‘ little dreams he who, rude in nature, bad in heart, and feeble in understanding, — without principle, feeling, or religion, — with no restraints in this world, and no communings with the other, — ah, little thinks the common, vulgar mind, of the dread act he perpetrates when he launches a *blow* against a fellow-being.’ ”

“ He bent his steps towards his favorite Park. His thoughts now rolled through his mind less confusedly. He was no longer mad, but they had a deep and solemn motion. He passed through the tall Brandenburg gate. The guard at his post looked at him ; he shrank from his eye, and the man seemed inclined to stop him, but did not.

“ ‘ He sees,’ said Claude, ‘ humiliation in my very walk.’ ”

“ There is something in a night ramble which restores the agitated soul to itself. He felt the rapid motion, — the cool, sweet air abate, soothe, and calm the heat which till now had oppressed him. He penetrated into the beautiful recesses of the luxuriant wood. It was again a bright moonlight, and the scene touched him through all his agitation and awoke other feelings.

“ ‘ Receive me !’ he said, ‘ pure shades ; receive the outcast, now doubly outcast. Receive the stained, the shamed, the fallen ! Shrink not from me, ye flowers, nor turn away your protecting arms, ye calm old trees, who stand for ages through sun and storm, and never know what he who steals beneath your path knows to-night. When I last walked here I was as pure and scatheless as yourselves ; now I am apart from other men, unless I dip my hands in blood ! Oh, that it were for ever night ! Oh, could I remain for ever here, alone with you, — where no blood flows at my feet, and no hisses sound in my ears. A blow ! a blow ! Poor, poor Rossi ! *He* went mad ; and it was this same hand that struck him too. God ! when he told me of it, I little knew what a *blow* was. Why did not the lightning arrest that rash hand ere it cast on me this fatal misery I should have *killed* him, but I was held, — for good or for evil. Killed ! what if I *had* killed him ? What is killing ? what is life ? what is death ? Will not God pardon it ? Can I be punished for not bearing a burden beyond my strength ? and, after all, who says killing is *not* right ? ”

The Holy Scriptures call out "blood for blood"; and is not a blow blood? Is it not worse? We have killed each other since Abel's time, — daily and hourly. It is our nature. It enters into the plan of Providence. All things kill. The soft dove snatches the golden insect, — the hawk pierces the dove, — the lion tears his prey, — the boar has his tusk, — the serpent his sting. This sweet forest, so fair to view, is but a scene of continual massacre. The microscope, that discovers animalcules invisible to the naked eye, finds them killing each other. I have surely been led away by idle theories of human excellence. I have set myself apart as better than my fellow-beings. I am not. I do not wish to be. God made us mortal. *I will kill this man.* I will meet him, — and one of us shall die. Perhaps, now, he will not, — then still I will kill him. To-morrow, — a week hence, — a year, — twenty years, — standing amid his friends, — asleep, — awake, — in bed, — in the fields, — in the dance, — at the very altar, on his knees in repentant prayer, — I will kill him, — I will have his heart's blood!

"He paused. The last words had been spoken aloud. They sounded like the imprecations of a demon escaped from hell, amid these soft glades and perfumed bowers.

"Alas! what am I become? What bloody and dark demon has entered my body? Is this indeed honor? Is this duty? Our Redeemer suffered a blow! * * * * But that sublime tradition which paints the wandering Jew, — there is meaning in it. * * * * Oh God!" he continued, after pacing on yet further, "I am lost. I acknowledge myself weak. I know not what I say or do. I am rushing blindly upon murder, — upon death. The very fiends in the shape of human reason seem goading and urging me on. Alas! human reason is vain. I have listened to it too long. As yet my hands are pure from blood, — as yet I do not stand before the throne of Heaven, uncalled but by my own passion. There is a higher power, — I appeal to *Him*. I will not decide in my rashness. What do I care for man's opinion?"

"He lifted his hands and eyes to heaven. It was near morning, and the sky was singularly transparent. He gazed breathless upon its quiet, eternal fields, — the serene order of its glittering worlds, — the hushed groups of stars, — the moon pure, high, bright, and calm as the virtue which he had forgotten, — as the innocence he had nearly thrown away. A dark cloud, of which the summit was piled up, mass above mass, like the silver Pyrenean cliffs above the blue Mediterranean, and whose base, black and definitely marked against the radiant air, lay stretched like a huge rock in a summer deep, gave to that upper world of light a new and awful aspect. As

he gazed, a sudden breeze came softly rushing over the tree-tops, — kissing the murmuring leaves, — reaching the face of the half-maddened being below, — cooling his brow, and cheek, and heart, — lifting the hair from his hot forehead, — and wafting to his senses and to his soul, in a cloud of perfume, a consciousness of love, — of hope, — of life, — of peace, — of Heaven. At the same moment large tears rose to his burning eyelids and rolled down his cheeks; and, throwing himself upon the ground, — alone, in that silent wood, — unseen but by watchful stars, — the proudest spirit that ever walked the globe bent to earthly anguish, and he wept, convulsively, like a child.

“ Oh, Elkington ! Could a wretch like thee bend that brow to the grassy ground, and shake, with almost fatal pangs, a heart which was to thee as the floating eagle to the howling cur ? Thou hast triumphed, — but beware ! The triumph of guilt is a wrong against Heaven. The good man is the child of God, and God is omnipresent, and he is around us, — in the very air, — when we know it not.

“ There is a blessing in tears. They are waters from Heaven, and they cleanse the soul to its pristine peace and purity.

“ ‘ It is not right,’ muttered Claude, ‘ to take human life for human passion. Shall I not leave the task of punishing to the sublime Being who rules the universe ? Is he absent ? is he powerless ? ’

“ A peal of thunder burst over the starting earth ere the last word had left his lip ; at the same moment the lightning darted with a blinding intensity. The tremendous volume of sound paused after the first shock, — rolled on, — paused, — went on and on again, — crushingly, — as if annihilation itself had come upon mankind ; and repeating several times its appalling reverberations, — broad as the air, and apparently stirring the earth from its very orbit, — lost itself threateningly, but calmly, as if amid the vastness of other spheres. Claude had not yet moved when a torrent came rushing down, and he was drenched to the skin ; when he raised his head, the sky was wrapped in utter darkness. The wind swept over the wood, bending the tallest trees, and twisting their gnarled limbs till they groaned as if with fear and pain. The peal was followed by another, and so close and heavy that the instinct of self-preservation occupied his mind, to the exclusion of the subject which had so deeply agitated him. He hastened out of the Park into the broad road, where he was less in danger than among the trees. There is something in a good drenching which deadens human passions, and shows how weak and idle are even some of those words which make us commit deeds

irreparable. The floods which drenched him were delicious, and cooled his fever. He breathed more freely, he trod more firmly ; and, if the truth must be added, at a considerably swifter pace than he generally adopted. His course was bent also towards the gate, and he reëntered the town.

“ The rain, almost as suddenly as it had commenced, ceased, and a fissure appeared across the masses of black clouds which obscured the heavens. The dispersion of the vapors was so extremely rapid, that, even thrilled as he was by the incident which had just occurred, it fastened his attention. Forming themselves into separate piles, the clouds broke apart in all quarters, leaving the blue void stainless, and the stars glittering with unwonted brightness. Then the whole air, earth, and heaven were suddenly illuminated by a soft radiance. A massive breadth of vapor had passed from before the moon, and she broke out full orbéd and almost light as day, while each torn fragment of silver cloud disappeared entirely, and the air became as still as the heaven.

“ ‘ Oh God,’ said he, ‘ I worship thee in thy temple, I call upon thee for aid. May this be to me an emblem of my own soul. Its passions, however tremendous, belong to earth ; its calm hopes, to Heaven. I commit myself to thee.’

“ And his soul now poured itself in prayer, which seemed to rise unimpeded to the Throne of Mercy. He had implored a sign, and Heaven had granted it. The serenity of nature taught him by its example to sit serene after the wildest storm, which the same hand that conjured up could waft away, and that no tempest could reach the fair arrangement of right and truth. Slowly he wandered to his home. No weakness disturbed his spirit or his intellect. He had made up his determination to pass the indignity he had received in silence. The mortal body was subdued and over-mastered by the superior mind. At the word of reflection and of religion the hot blood flowed cool and placid through his frame. His obedient pulse played temperately, and all his soul was peace.” — Vol. II. pp. 25 – 35.

For the purpose of contrasting the two principles of action, — that of a sense of religious duty, and that of a sense of worldly honor, — the author introduces a friend of Wyndham, a Mr. Denham, who arrives at Berlin with a young and lovely wife, and who knows the infamous character of Lord Elkington. This gentleman is present when Wyndham receives the dishonoring blow, takes part in the quarrel, and, obedient to the duellist's code, makes an arrangement to

meet Elkington. He is shot through the heart at the second fire, and a succession of tragical scenes follow, which the author has drawn with great effect. Through them all, Wyndham is true to his principles. But harder trials yet await him. Lady Beverly discloses to her son the astonishing fact, that Wyndham is the son of the Earl of Beverly by a former marriage ; that the Earl had been wrought upon by her own arts to believe he had been dishonored by his wife, and had cast her inexorably from him ; that she had left his home, and finally had sailed with her infant son to the West Indies ; that the vessel was wrecked, and she was reported among the lost ; but that the son had been accidentally preserved, and was in fact none other than Mr. Wyndham, who was thus the true heir to the Beverly title and estates. The person, therefore, who had secretly supplied the money for Wyndham's support, was no other than the old Earl, whose approaching death, Elkington, pressed to the earth with debts, is anxiously and impatiently awaiting. When the Earl's last illness is announced, Elkington writes to his bankers to stop all further payments to Wyndham. This immediately reduces our hero to utter want, and exposes him to the power of Count Carolan, who, from being his friend, has become, by the arts of Elkington, and by his own vanity, his most unrelenting enemy. The Count calls for the payment of a debt, which Wyndham had accidentally contracted, and, upon his inability to meet the demand, forthwith sends him to prison, where our hero remains some time, apparently deserted by the world, and ruined for ever. He is at length set at liberty upon the security of his friend, Lavalle, and without a murmur applies himself to earn a subsistence by teaching the English language. He is thus enabled to pay off his debts, which he does to the last farthing. But in the mean time the French Revolution has arrived at its height, and the aristocratic Carolan, whose daughter, by the way, has been rescued from the pistol of an assassin by Wyndham, at the most imminent risk of his own life, deems it his duty to offer his services to the royal family of France, whither he departs, accompanied by the Countess Ida. A revolution of still greater importance to our hero's fortunes has silently been going on. Our old friend, Madame Wharton, has received a clew which she determines to follow out, and departs for England. There she succeeds in her

pursuit ; she proves the identity of Claude Wyndham, as the son of the Earl of Beverly, and makes to him immediately the astounding discovery that she is his own mother, being in fact the first wife of the Earl, who had been so long supposed to be lost. She convinces her husband, during an interval of restoration to his senses, of his injustice towards herself and the heir of his immense estates. All legal measures are immediately taken to place the claims of our hero beyond the reach of doubt or cavil, and the joyful intelligence is despatched at once to Berlin. Of course all this puts an entirely different face upon our hero's affairs, and makes him at once as much the object of attention and admiration as he had lately been of neglect and contempt.

But what has become of the Carolans ? The progress of the French Revolution has been so rapid and terrible, that all hopes of the Count's escape from the perilous condition into which he had so self-confidently thrust himself, are lost. But Wyndham determines to attempt his rescue. He enters France, assumes the disguise of a Jacobin, and after innumerable hair-breadth scapes, and having performed prodigies of valor, finally saves the Count and his lovely daughter, and returns with them to England. The character of Count Carolan has been completely changed by his misfortunes and sufferings ; and, without knowing the present position of our hero's affairs, he offers him his daughter. Wyndham keeps the secret, and all the parties are of course most agreeably surprised upon arriving in England, and being taken to the magnificent residence of the Earl of Beverly.

Such is a brief outline of this interesting story. There are episodes connected with the plot, of great moment, which we have entirely omitted. It is obvious, that the scheme of our author embraces events and materials enough for twenty common novels ; but we think our readers will be satisfied, upon perusing the book, that he has used them with no little ingenuity ; that his characters are in general well sustained ; and that his sketches of society are drawn from observation, and present us with a series of very lively pictures of the fashionable and diplomatic circles of a great continental capital. Interspersed with the stirring scenes of brilliant society, are many beautiful descriptive passages, breathing a poet's love of nature, and showing an artist's eye for her mani-

fold enchantments. The following, for example, seems to us very fine.

“It was a pleasant night. The air was still and clear without being cold, and very refreshing and agreeable. The moon was in the wane, and had just risen, casting a singular radiance over the earth and heaven. Having supped heartily, and, with several new and interesting topics of reflection, being too fully awake to think of sleep, he determined to prolong his stroll around the town. The streets were silent and lonely. Here and there the night-watch went slowly by, with his long, shrill whistle, as if ingeniously contrived to disturb the sick, to awaken the sleeping, and to do service to none except thieves and robbers, who, thus warned, get to their hiding-places till he is out of the way. Before the palaces of princes and military officers of high standing, and the public edifices, the guards paced slowly to and fro, in their simple gray cloaks and leathern caps, their muskets glittering in the moonbeams; and once during his ramble he was crossed by a company of fifteen or twenty soldiers, on their rounds to relieve guard, their measured tramp echoing on the pavement, and reminding him that he was in the metropolis of one of the greatest military governments of Europe.

“Claude went on, now indulging in his own reveries, now watching the broad, level streets, so beautiful in the moonlight, and the sculptured palaces, with their shadowy courts and half-unearthly company of statues; now listening to the whistle of the watch, as it retreated and died away in the distance. At length he found himself before the Brandenburg gate, and paused to admire the tall columns, the stately outline, and the bronze group upon the top. The guard at the gate made no question as he passed out to extend a ramble so delightful into the wood. It was the hour for calm thought, and he had many subjects of reflection. The principal one was the young girl with whom he had become acquainted in so curious a manner, and who seemed the embodying of his fairest visions of woman. He had been struck with her character as described by Madame Wharton, — an authority the best that could exist on such a subject. That of a mother would have been partial; that of a friend might have been drawn from imperfect sources. His own experience he could have placed but little confidence in, for he knew how different a thing woman often is in her real mind from what she appears when invested with the charm of beauty and seen in the walks of pleasure. It is probable that, without the previous eulogies of Madame Wharton, the grace and loveliness of *Ida* would

not have succeeded in impressing him so seriously. Every one will not sympathize with a young man who cannot fall in love till assured by better authority than his own observations of the merit of the object. But this was Claude's character ; imbued with thought, his feelings, or at least his actions, were subservient to his reason. His lonely life had rendered contemplation almost too habitual to him. He had dwelt too long and too much on the valuelessness of the earthly objects so ardently sought by his fellow-creatures. For, after all the everlasting homilies on the evanescence of existence, while they rarely arrest the thoughtless in their pursuit of pleasure or the wicked in their career of guilt, often render the contemplative unnecessarily sad, and deprive the unhappy of sources of distraction from solemn realities which a benevolent Providence did not intend should appal or overshadow us. To Claude most of the objects of life were phantoms,—most of its joys illusions. He wanted the developement of his affections to balance and perfect his character, and to counteract the results of a too exclusive developement of his intellectual faculties. He had lived in a world of thought. He wanted to descend into the warmer one of feeling. His mind had occupied itself with subjects vast, high, and eternal. He had not studied society and common life with sufficient attention. Such a mind may be great if occasion presents, but cannot be contented in the world where we are destined to live. Some author observes with a true philosophy, 'Bad as men may be, Providence intends that we shall love them.' The uncompromising energy of Claude's character, and the independence of an original thinker, made the path of youth one of danger, and caused him in many things to stand aloof from other men.

"As he wandered on, Elkington, his singular insolence, — Lady Beverly, her unaccountable curiosity, which seemed to watch his actions and search into his soul, — recurred to his memory. The former he resolved to avoid if possible, and he determined never to deviate from the cold courtesy which should avert a quarrel. The anger with which he had received his rudeness passed away under the fields of heaven. He reflected that it was not in the power of such a man to insult him.

"He paused at these thoughts and gazed upward. The air was strangely clear ; for nature, as if seeking higher praise than man's, seems to put on more wonderful beauty when his eye no longer gazes on it. An indescribable peace and lustre reigned everywhere ; upon the piles of motionless and silver clouds, the steady-beaming planets, and the far off, ever-burning groups of stars. He gazed long and intently with a servid

wonder. There flowed the Milky Way, rolling its snowy and noiseless waves through the track of blue. He gazed almost breathless into its eternal depths. There was Orion, mounting heavenward with his glittering belt ; and there, — at rest amid this revolving multitude, — the point on which seemed to hang all this infinite sphere of worlds, — half seen, and undistinguished by the common eye, — the wanderer's guide — the lover's hope, — the type, in its constancy, of how few hearts ! — lay the polar star." — Vol. i. pp. 87 – 90.

The character of Countess Ida is a very lovely conception ; and the silent attachment between her and Wyndham is described and illustrated with much beauty of sentiment, and delicacy of feeling. The following passage will show this, besides presenting another example of our author's descriptive powers.

"It was a warm spring day. The sun was bright on the pleasant *Linden*, and the gay population were abroad enjoying the fine weather. Nothing is so delightful as the approach of spring in these cold climates. Claude was peculiarly alive to such impressions ; and, as he passed out of the Brandenburg gate into the universal and favorite promenade of the Park, he perceived tokens of the spring visible everywhere around him. This season had stolen upon him unawares. He had been so occupied in the world of fashion with operas, balls, *soirées*, and breakfasts ; with glittering crowds, the same ever-recurring faces, and all the pomp, glare, and circumstance of magnificent entertainments, that the soft and exquisite forms of half-forgotten nature struck his eye and touched his soul with a sense of happiness. As the various incidents of the now vanished winter rose to his memory, — the constant succession of brilliant *fêtes*, — the numerous nights which had found him wandering amid the half-fairy splendor of royal saloons, till the breaking day at length sent him to his bed, — the new acquaintances he had made, — the dark face, full of meaning, of Lady Beverly, — the rudeness of Elkington, — the bland courtesy of Carolan, — the dignified friendship of Madame Wharton, — and last, not least, the enchantment which he had found in the society of Ida, and which had daily grown more delicious and more dangerous, — all seemed a fantastic dream amid the surrounding silence and solitude. This beautiful forest was now deserted ; the city population had not yet begun to appear in its sylvan glades. Only the squirrel paused and listened in the path ; while the birds, whose clear notes echoed through the wood, scarcely flew at his approach. The grass

had burst out everywhere, and the buttons of the trees were fully opened, disclosing the tender leaves and blossoms. Flowers, some the spontaneous tribute of nature, and some set by the hand of the gardener, were peeping from the wayside or bending over the streams. The earth, long dead, had a warm and living look. Verdure was upon the ground, and perfume in the air. Two or three swans, stately as their mistress Juno, came floating down the stream, beneath the arch of a beautiful bridge which hung reflected in the flood; and the air, entirely free from the chill which generally accompanies even the fairest promises of a spring day, as painful recollections of the past sometimes disturb the pleasure of the present, was altogether bland and balmy.

“He walked on with a thoughtful pace. The conduct of Ida had been a kind of mystery to him. Since their cold parting at the *déjeuner* of Prince R., her manner had been generally so formal as to relieve him from the necessity of being on his guard; yet, at times, this reserve gave place to a gayety so familiar and a kindness so gentle as to startle him with the idea that, while he fancied himself only subjecting his own heart to danger, he was, in reality, also gaining the confidence of this artless and inexperienced girl. He had parted from her the day before, after an interview deeply interesting to him. The passion which had now taken entire possession of his soul had half betrayed itself in her presence, and the sweet instincts of a heart which had lost the power of directing itself, found in her manner so much tenderness even in its reserve, that he could not doubt that his love was returned. It was at this point that he walked forth to reflect upon his position, with feelings which, although filled with happiness, were not of an enviable kind. What had he done? He had gained the affections of one affianced to another. He had weakly lingered by the side of one he could never marry, till perhaps their separation would be as much a source of unhappiness to her as to him. This was little more than the act of a scoundrel; and, in reflecting upon it, he experienced the humiliating consciousness of having deviated from the path of honor. Alas! so invisible are the lines which separate innocence from guilt, that the most honest sometimes find themselves over the limit before they are aware of it. No mortal step can assure itself against this danger; but, while the weak and the depraved go on in their career of temptation, the noble-minded start from the flowery road the instant they see where it leads.

“‘Can I doubt it?’ thought Claude, as he wandered into the thickest and most solitary part of the wood. ‘She shares my infatuation. Let me, for the first time, breathe to the air

the secret which as yet hovers only in our dreams. She loves me. What power has aided my daring wishes? Some demon, perhaps, to effect my ruin!

"In the ardor of his reveries, he had so far forgotten himself as to utter this rhapsody aloud. It was not without a guilty start that he heard a step at his side, and, lifting his eyes, beheld Madame Wharton."—Vol. I. pp. 140–143.

As a set-off to the graver and more solemn scenes, the amusing absurdities of the Digby family are very well introduced. The following is part of the occurrences at a *Dey-jooney dangsang*.

"At this moment the general clash of voices ceased suddenly, and was succeeded by a deep silence. An officer of the court entering with his *baton*, made a passage for the royal family. There was, however, little occasion for his exertions, for the crowd fell back on either side, leaving a wide space for his majesty Frederic William II., with the various members and guests of his family. The monarch advanced in the midst of the rooms, and Claude was presented by Lavallo to Prince —, the distinguished nobleman whose duty it was to name to royalty those who aspired to the honor of an interview. This ceremony was soon over, as well as those which etiquette rendered proper to the other illustrious personages. Having happily gone through these preliminaries, he was struck with the appearance of the Digbys. The good dame was magnificently arrayed in a brimstone-colored, richly-embroidered satin dress, hat and feathers; a *toilet* somewhat conspicuous on any occasion, but unfortunately so on the present, since, the court being in mourning, it was the height of indecorum to appear in any other color than black or white.

"'Oh Dieu, madame,' said Madame de Godeau, in an under tone, with consternation depicted in her countenance; 'you are not dressed in mourning, — when I tell you, — mon Dieu, — c'est épouvantable.'

"'You told me, — mem?' said Madame Digby. 'You never told me.'

"'Yes, I told you the whole court were in mourning.'

"'Ah, certainly, mem; I recollect that, perfectly, but I hadn't an idea you wanted *me* to go in mourning too. Why, I don't even know who's dead. I'm sure I have never seen the poor man in all my life!'

"It was, however, now too late for any remedy, and she determined to carry it through. She therefore followed the *grande maîtresse*, who had obligingly waited till the end of her colloquy with Madame de Godeau, and, with her elbows well

protruded from her ample body, made her way through the opposing multitude with little ceremony. Here and there Claude heard a nearly suppressed '*Ah diable, quel drôle de figure !*' or, '*Dieu ! qui est cette madame là !*' Mary was dressed in blue, but she looked so extremely pretty, that even they who laughed at were compelled to admire her.

"Madame Digby, at length in good society, — in the very centre of her much-talked-of *ho-tong*, — stood in the presence of the princess with the air of one who intended to show the world that she was not to be intimidated. The distinguished lady to whom she was about to be presented seemed scarcely able to repress a smile, and the circle around were still less successful, at the awkward air and ridiculous affectation of the honest dame as she made her opening salutation. But royal affability on these occasions has no limit, and all in their presence are greeted with the courtesy which forms one of the ornaments of a throne. Half afraid of being encountered by one of Lady Beverly's haughty stares, Mrs. Digby was delighted to find the princess all smiles and blandness, and, recovering all her ambition with her ease, she cast a look around to assure herself that the whole assembly were witnesses of the honor she was enjoying.

" 'Have you been long in Berlin ?' said her royal highness, in French.

"An address in an unknown language would have abashed any one not blessed with considerable nerve ; but bounteous nature had left no such deficiency in the composition of Madame Digby. She only, therefore, approached a step or two nearer, — much too close for the distance which more experienced courtiers have a care to leave between royalty and those in its presence, — and, leaning her ear towards the face of the princess, she merely pronounced, in her own peculiar way, the word

" 'Mem ?'

"The princess repeated the question.

" 'I really beg your pardon, mem ; but, if you could speak English with the same trouble, I should be more able to communicate with your ladyship, mem, — that is, — with your royal highness. Madame de Godeau informed me that you spoke English like a native, mem, — your royal highness.'

" 'I hope you find Berlin agreeable !' said her august companion, in English, and with a good-natured smile.

" 'Well, mem, I can't say but what I do.'

"The princess began here another question, but Mrs. Digby interrupted her to add, 'Your royal highness.'

“ , Are you pleasantly lodged ? ’ inquired the princess.

“ ‘ Why, mem, pretty fair, compared with where we were at Hamburg ; but the stoves give Mr. Digby the headache, your royal highness ! ’

“ ‘ We know you English never find on the Continent the comforts which you enjoy in your own country,’ said the princess politely.

“ ‘ No, indeed, mem, — your royal highness, — that ’s what we don’t ; and as for—’

“ ‘ Are you attached to any embassy ? ’ inquired the princess.

“ ‘ No, mem, not yet, but I believe we shall advertise for something of that sort ; my relative, Lord Clew, was—’

“ She was cut short by a very affable courtesy on the part of the princess, and an exceedingly significant look from the *grande maîtresse* on one side, and Madame de Godeau on the other, intimating that her interview was over. She accordingly made a salutation, such as, in her mind, fitted the rank of the person she addressed, and her own character as a perfectly fine lady, who had at length arrived at the very summit of the *ho-tong* ; and, ignorant of the conspicuous violation of etiquette of which she was guilty, she stepped away, turning her shoulder and back directly in the princess’s face.

“ That lady not noticing, or not seeming to notice, the last manœuvre, turned towards Mary, who stood the next in the circle. The *grande maîtresse* led the trembling girl forward. Her timidity was so obvious, and she turned so pale, that the benevolent heart of the princess was interested in her behalf ; and she addressed her so kindly, and led and sustained the conversation with so much consideration for her youthful and not ungraceful distress, that Mary found herself fully exempted from the necessity of making other remarks than her usual ‘ yes ’ and ‘ no.’

“ The next object which attracted Claude’s attention was Digby, the perspiration standing on his forehead, his face always rather rubicund from the vivifying effect of good English beef and beer, now heated beyond itself by the anxieties and horrors which, poor fellow, he had undergone in his attempts to be presented. Unacquainted with the faces of the royal personages, even when by their side, he sometimes ran against a prince, and sometimes made an inquiry of a princess. Some one whom he had never seen before was every moment wheeling him violently round with, ‘ *Prenez garde ! — sa majesté !* ’ or, ‘ *Monsieur, la princesse !* ’ At length, tired, terrified, and internally swearing that no one, — not Mrs. Digby herself,

— should ever catch him again in a scene for which his habits of life had so little fitted him, his knees aching, and his feet in a state of torment from the effect of a pair of high-heeled and very small new boots, which his wife had persuaded him to purchase for the occasion, he reached a broad crimson sofa, glittering with gold, and occupied on the other end by a lady and gentleman. Throwing himself down in an exhausted state, he muttered half aloud,

“ ‘ Well, thank God ! I ’m here at last. Here sit I till dinner.’ ”

“ Taking out a yellow silk pocket-handkerchief, he deliberately wiped the moisture from his forehead and blew his nose ; and he had just finished taking a comfortable pinch of snuff, and was proceeding to offer the box to his neighbour, when he was struck with the intensity of astonishment with which a little military officer, with an enormous pair of mustaches, an exceedingly rich uniform, a multitude of orders, a high chapeau under his arm, and a long sword, fixed his eyes sternly upon him. In some surprise, not to say consternation, he hastily put up his handkerchief and snuff-box, and looked around to see what he had done, when he perceived that several others, — indeed, all the surrounding spectators, — were regarding him attentively, and with visible tokens of amazement. Among others, a person half behind him, and partly withdrawn within the embrasure of a window, began to make him significant signs and violent gesticulations, and, at length leaning over, addressed him. The remark was lost, however, in a language which he did not understand. At length he came to the conclusion that he had torn his clothes, and, horrified at the idea, he proceeded to examine his elegant court suit, when his perplexity was terminated by Claude, who, perceiving his dilemma and the cause of it, approached him from behind and whispered,

“ ‘ Get up. You are sitting with the prince and princess.’ ”

“ If a bombshell had fallen at the poor fellow’s feet, he could not have been more alarmed. He started up, and was darting off to hide his humiliation in some distant corner, but Claude with a strong hand very quietly withheld him.

“ ‘ Good God ! what now ? ’ said Digby, afraid to move.

“ ‘ You are running directly against the prince royal ! ’ ”

“ ‘ For Heaven’s sake, then, let me go this way ! ’ And, with a spring, he would have run full tilt against another member of the royal family, had not Claude again checked his course. He remained, therefore, motionless, and resumed the task of wiping his forehead.

“ ‘ Well, I say, — Wyndham ! ’ he muttered, ‘ if *this* is Mrs. Digby’s *ho-long* — ! ’

“ The circle dispersed and Claude released his prisoner. It was not long before he observed him planted in a corner, with his back held resolutely against the wall, standing as straight as a grenadier under review, occasionally making a wry face at the pressure of his new boots, and now and then applying his handkerchief to his temples.” — Vol. I. pp. 107 – 112.

The work shows a deep sympathy with human nature, as well as a familiar acquaintance with the higher forms of European social life. The author has not been dazzled by the trappings of royalty and aristocracy, though he can describe them all so well. The virtues and the vices of high society are set forth by him with impartiality and force ; and we rise from his pages with a cordial respect for his abilities, a sympathy with his views of life, and an admiration of the moral purity which is shed over the scenes he has so vividly placed before us.

ART. IX. — *The Rural Life of England* ; by WILLIAM HOWITT, Author of the “ *Book of the Seasons*,” &c. In Two Volumes. London. 1838. 12mo.

THESE two volumes are among the most attractive and entertaining that have appeared lately from the British press. To Americans the subject can never be destitute of interest. We have too many common feelings with the English, too much pride in our common ancestry and our common literature, too much veneration for the land of our forefathers, ever to be indifferent to the welfare of those who speak the same language, and who uphold the same principles of liberty with ourselves. We may have a family quarrel now and then, in which sundry hearty cuffs will be exchanged ; foolish tourists may and will provoke an angry feeling from time to time, by some profound disquisition on silver forks, and the different modes of eating eggs ; serious questions may, from time to time, be presented, requiring mutual for-